

Finding the Clotilda

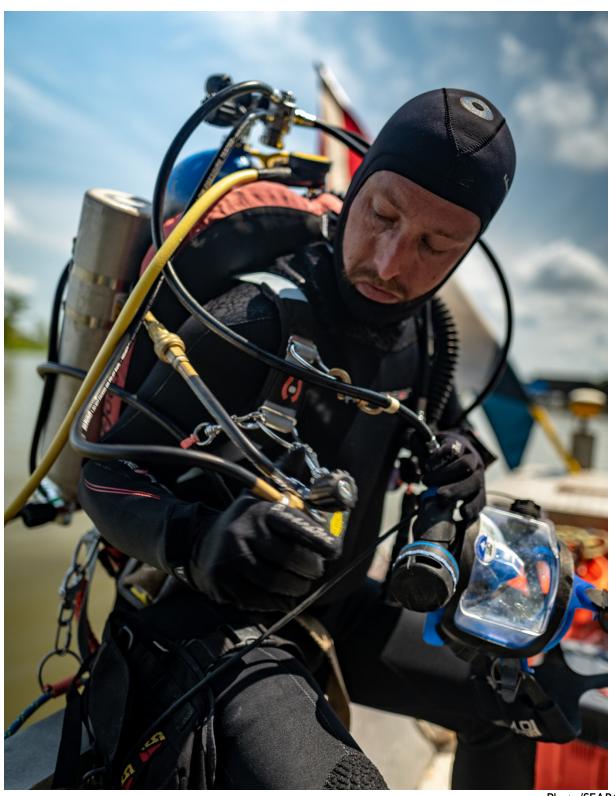
Media Kit May 30, 2019



Photo/SEARCH, INC.

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Background

The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) and the National Geographic Society (NGS) contracted SEARCH Inc. (SEARCH) to conduct a shallow water archaeological assessment of a submerged cultural resource in the Mobile River in Baldwin County, Alabama. SEARCH previously recorded the resource, archaeological site IBa704, during a 2018 SEARCH investigation as Target 005(Delgado et al. 2018b). IBa704 is a midnineteenth century wooden-hulled sailing vessel. The purpose of the investigation was to assess the previously documented shipwreck and determine its potential eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Historical documentation suggested the area could be the potential location of the scuttled schooner Clotilda. This investigation served as a follow-up to jointly conducted fieldwork between SEARCH, AHC, the National Park Service (NPS), the National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC), and the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP) in March 2018 (Delgado et al. 2018a and 2018b). SEARCH completed a total of eight dives from July 2018 to January 2019 for a total bottom time of 252 minutes. When possible, the team employed shallow water snorkeling to aid in site documentation. Diver investigations focused on assessment of IBa704 and included the immediate area surrounding the site. SEARCH completed this project in accordance with the AHC Administrative Code for Archaeological Investigations (Chapter 460-X-9), the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 61) and in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended (Public Law [PL] 89-665), and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800); the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, as amended (PL 93-291); the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979, as amended (PL 96-95); and the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) nationwide permit file number SAM-2018-01100-LETauthorized the archaeological work on IBA704. AHC State Archaeologist Stacye Hathorn reviewed and approved the SEARCH's team work on the research design, permits and participated in field work. SEARCH completed the investigation to carefully examine the site, identify diagnostic features that would further characterize this submerged cultural resource, and draft recommendations regarding the potential eligibility of the wreck for listing in the NRHP, in accordance with the NHPA.



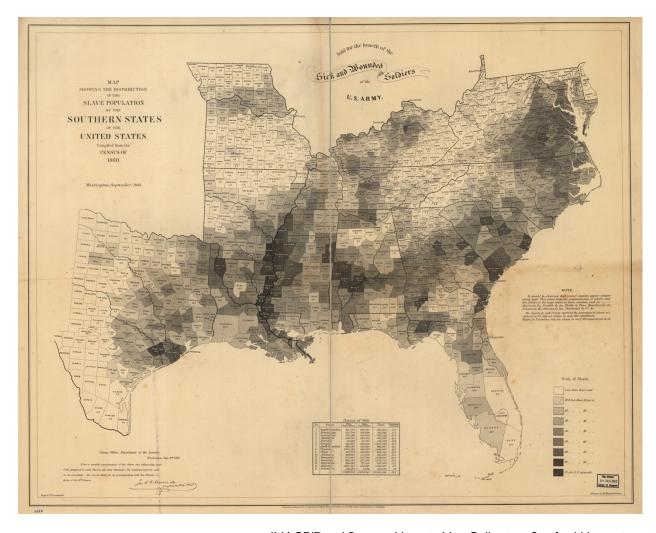
Image/AHC

Archaeological Report Summary

Site IBa704 and Clotilda

SEARCH, Inc., as represented on this project by Senior Vice President and project director Dr. James P. Delgado and maritime archaeologists Alex DeCaro, Joseph Grinnan, Kyle Lent, Deborah Marx and Raymond Tubby, working with and for the Alabama Historical Commission and with support from the National Geographic Society (NGS), has concluded a nearly year-long project to completely survey a portion of the Mobile River to locate and identify shipwrecks and other cultural features. That project has identified fourteen separate shipwrecks, all part of a ship graveyard, as well as submerged structures used to make the river safer for navigation in the 1850s, and river sediments with 2,500-year-old wood embedded in them. Those sediments indicate this portion of the river has never been dredged and is perhaps one of the last untouched physical "records" of the prehistoric riverine environment in the region.

One of the goals of this comprehensive survey was to see if we could locate the wreck of the schooner *Clotilda*, the last known vessel to bring enslaved persons to the United States, and then immediately burned and sunk in the Mobile River in 1860.



IMAGE/David Rumsey Historic Map Collection, Stanford University

It is the opinion of the archaeological team that one of the fourteen shipwrecks, site I Ba704, that has been discovered in the Mobile River is likely the schooner *Clotilda*. This conclusion comes at the end of a lengthy and detailed program of archaeological survey, excavation, documentation, and analysis.

The reasons for this conclusion are outlined in our report, which will be released publicly. In summary, our conclusions, as reviewed by an independent panel of experts and scholars, are that this is likely *Clotilda* because:

- 1. The wreck has the same dimensions and the form as Clotilda.
- 2. Analysis of the wreck shows it was built regionally or locally, and with the exact materials documented in the official records for *Clotilda*: white oak, yellow pine, and iron.
- 3. Analysis of the construction of the wreck shows it was built prior to 1870. It was also professionally and expertly constructed, a fact noted and seen as an exceptional quality for *Clotilda* when it was launched in Mobile in 1855.
- 4. The form of the vessel and other features indicate it was a schooner, most probably two-masted, and carried a centerboard, all features documented for *Clotilda*.
- 5. A detailed survey of all surviving historical survey records for schooners in the entire Gulf of Mexico region, and including those of the port of Mobile, found only four vessels built in the size range as this wreck; only one, *Clotilda*, out of some 1500 vessels we assessed in the archival records, matches the wreck.
- 6. The wreck lies in a direct line and within little more than a mile from the documented location where Captain Foster of *Clotilda* reportedly discharged the captive people on *Clotilda* into the waiting river steamer *Czar* under the cover of night.
- 7. Captain Foster reported he burned and sank his schooner in 20 feet of water. The wreck has evidence of partial destruction by fire, and at its deepest lies in 20 feet of water.

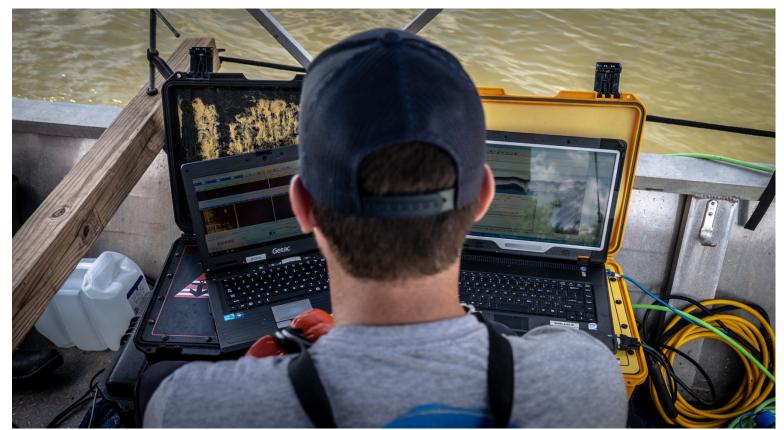
Difficult conditions, with zero visibility, strong currents, and potentially hostile aquatic wildlife made work on the wreck difficult. Excavation was limited in conditions where it was impossible to see anything. The conclusion of the likely identity of *Clotilda* comes from the fact that no artifact with a name or other direct identifier has been found and this conclusion is supported by the preponderance of the other evidence. As noted, our conclusions were independently reviewed and agreed with by an international and national group of peer reviewers.

In collaboration with AHC State Archaeologist Stacye Hathorn, SEARCH, Inc. conducted this work under a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permit. The USACE granted permit # SAM-2018-01100-LET on November 27, 2018. All of the work in this report has been completed with the permission of and in partnership with the AHC. Funding was provided by the AHC, NGS, and SEARCH, Inc. NGS also provided additional assistance through photographic and video documentation of the investigation and laboratory analysis.

This project offers new, previously overlooked insights about the schooner and its deposition into the archaeological record, as well as a greater understanding of its multiple contexts. *Clotilda* and its voyages are historic, and the final, illegal voyage is especially so. If this is *Clotilda*, as we believe, then it is a ship engaged in the slave trade lost in the context of conducting its work as a slaver, and in its case, the last one to bring enslaved people to the US. That voyage was the end point of an involuntary and violent migration of three centuries' duration. It also came within a few years and the repeal of slavery. It would lead to the founding of

Africatown, a community that remains an important part of the story of African-Americans, of Alabama, and of the United States. Africatown is not only a living community — it is a significant historical and archaeological site listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

SEARCH, Inc. acknowledges the assistance and earlier participation in the study that commenced this project of the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP) and its partners, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC), Diving with a Purpose (DWP), and the National Park Service (NPS).



IMAGE/SEARCH

Logos, Images, and Video Available at bit.ly/AHCClotildaPress



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May 27, 2019



Archaeological Evidence and Experts Determine - Shipwreck Likely Clotilda

(Montgomery, AL) After a comprehensive assessment and months of research, the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) is proud to announce the wreck of the Clotilda, the last known vessel to bring enslaved persons to the United States, has been identified.

For nearly 160 years, the waters around Mobile have concealed the final destination of the Gulf Schooner *Clotilda*. Residents of **Africatown** have carried the memory of their ancestors who were forcefully and violently migrated from Africa to the shores of Alabama. Since then, the final chapter of the *Clotilda* story has been shrouded in mystery.

From February to July 1860, the *Clotilda* illegally transported 110 people from **Benin**, **Africa** to **Mobile**, **Alabama**. This gross transgression took place 52 years after the United States banned the importation of enslaved people to the country. Co-conspirators, **Timothy Meaher** and **Captain William Foster** made an effort to evade authorities and destroy evidence of their criminal voyage by burning the vessel and dividing the Africans among their captors, where they remained in slavery until the end of the Civil War. A small band of the *Clotilda* passengers reunited post-war with the hopes of returning to Africa. When that dream was not realized, the survivors and their descendants established a new home for themselves in the Plateau area of Mobile – a community which is now known today as **Africatown**.

"The discovery of the Clotilda is an extraordinary archaeological find," said **Lisa Demetropoulos Jones, State Historic Preservation Officer and Executive Director of the Alabama Historical Commission**. "The voyage represented one of the darkest eras of modern history and is a profound discovery of the tangible evidence of slavery."

Jones continued, "This new discovery brings the tragedy of slavery into focus while witnessing the triumph and resilience of the human spirit in overcoming the horrific crime that led to the establishment of Africatown."

Under the federal mandate set forth in the **Abandoned Shipwrecks Act of 1999**, the Alabama Historical Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office of Alabama, is charged with the management and guardianship of maritime archaeological sites abandoned and embedded in Alabama waters.

In accordance with that mandate, the AHC took action last January after Ben Raines, an Alabama reporter, broke news with a claim of having located and identified the ship. Though the ship detected was in fact not the *Clotilda*, the incident renewed interest in resolving the puzzle of what had become of the ship that transplanted the enslaved individuals from Africa to Alabama.

The work and focus of the AHC became to locate the remains and confirm the identity of the storied shipwreck. The Alabama Historical Commission, working in conjunction with Black Heritage Council, National Geographic Society (NGS), SEARCH, Inc., Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC), the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP), Diving with a Purpose (DWP), and the National Park Service



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(NPS), assembled a team of foremost experts in maritime archaeology led by **Dr. James Delgado** and SEARCH, Inc. to conduct archaeological assessment of a previously unsearched area of the Mobile River.

Initial historical research and archaeological survey revealed up to two dozen vessels from the 19th and 20th centuries. The survey led to underwater excavation that revealed one wreck that closely matched some of the known characteristics of *Clotilda*. "Utilizing the latest scientific techniques and in-depth archival research, the team identified a target for further investigation and excavation," said **Eric Sipes, Senior Archaeologist with the State of Alabama**.

Before this survey, Raines and a team of researchers from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) had conducted a search of their own that also pointed to the same target.

After a year of study, including forensic analysis in SEARCH and National Geographic's laboratories, consulting with other experts, exhaustive archival research into original documents, the scientific research concluded the wreck is likely *Clotilda*.

"The resulting report of findings was sent to an international panel of renowned maritime archaeologists for peer review to ensure the data met the highest standards of scientific research in the field," said Sipes.

Their conclusions were independently reviewed and agreed upon by an international suite of leading authorities.

"We are cautious about placing names on shipwrecks that no longer bear a name or something like a bell with the ship's name on it," notes Delgado, "but the physical and forensic evidence powerfully suggests that this is Clotilda."

Delgado also said that Ben Raines had continued to be involved with the search that was ultimately successful. "We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge Ben Raines. Ben brought international attention to this and I think the find has come in some measure as a result of Ben's initiative and determination." He went on to say, "There's no one person, there's a whole group of people who discovered Clotilda. Ben Raines is in that group."

Revealing details that point to the shipwreck being the Clotilda include confirmation of the schooner's unique size, dimensions, and building materials comprised of locally sourced lumber and "pig iron" that are an exact match to the specifications outlined in historic registries. Experts were able to observe the exceptional construction and determine the ship was built prior to 1870. The vessel remains also showed signs of burning, which is concurrent with Captain Foster's claim that he burned the *Clotilda* after scuttling her. A detailed survey of all surviving historical survey records for schooners in the entire Gulf of Mexico region, and including those of the port of Mobile, found only four vessels built in the size range as this wreck; only one, *Clotilda*, out of some 1,500 vessels assessed in the archival records, matches the wreck.

"Finding the Clotilda represents the final nautical bookend to one of the most horrific periods in American and world history. It is my hope that this discovery brings a comforting peace to the Africatown descendants and begins a process of genuine community and memory restoration," said **Kamau Sadiki**, a member of the Slave Wrecks Project and peer review team that confirmed the identity of the Clotilda.

Now that the preponderance of evidence makes a clear statement as to the likelihood of the ship's identity, the Alabama Historical Commission shifts its focus to the protection of the asset.

"The mission of the Alabama Historical Commission is to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic resources. We are working diligently with state and local agencies to secure site protections," said **Major General (Ret.)**



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Walter Givhan, Chair of the Alabama Historical Commission. "The State of Alabama holds this artifact as an irreplaceable cultural treasure and will prosecute any tampering or encroachment the fullest extent of the law. With the confirmation of this discovery, the responsibility to preserve it only increases, and the Alabama Historical Commission will continue to assess security needs and the most effective way to meet them."

The path to discovery has been heavily dependent upon the necessary corroboration by scientific methodology, which also requires additional research to not only inform next steps, but to make recommendations as to the overall preservation of the site. "Additional archaeological research will help us to learn more details about the story of the *Clotilda* and its survivors," remarked **Stacye Hathorn, State Archaeologist of Alabama**. "It is important to preserve the site so that additional research may be conducted and the story may emerge."

The search for the remains of this infamous ship has captured the public's attention over the past two years, and with it, a desire to bring to a conclusion this dark chapter in Alabama's history and provide answers for the descendants of the Clotilda and members of the Africatown community.

"As archaeologists, we are often asked why the work we do matters," offered **SEARCH**, **CEO**, **Anne Stokes**. "The story of *Clotilda* is a powerful testament to how cultural heritage can impact a community, especially one as powerfully connected to this story as Africatown."

"The National Geographic Society is honored to have supported the scientific research behind the discovery of the Clotilda. Supporting bold individuals and organizations who illuminate the wonders of our world, and all that's in it, is at the heart of the Society's mission," said **Fredrik Hiebert, archeologist-in-residence at the National Geographic Society**. "We are guided by the belief that science and exploration will help us better understand the human journey."

The significance of the archaeological find is not limited to the artifact; this resolution has been more than a century in the making for the descendants of the *Clotilda* survivors and for citizens of Africatown. They established themselves in a foreign land while holding fast to their customs and identity despite the tragedies that befell them.

"Finding this important historical asset is pivotal to reconciliation with the citizens of Africatown, the State of Alabama and the nation," said **Clara Nobles, Alabama Historical Commission Assistant Executive Director**. "We should not forget that the larger story here is the people and what they were able to accomplish."

"The leadership and citizens of Africatown look forward to working with the AHC and project partners to tell our story and move forward as a community," said **Joycelyn Davis, descendent from the Clotilda.**

On Thursday, May 30, the Media is invited to the Official Press Conference where the Archaeological Report will be released in conjunction with a celebration community event at the Robert Hope Center in the heart of Africatown. Representatives from the Alabama Historical Commission, Black Heritage Council, SEARCH, National Geographic, Smithsonian Institution, and others will be on hand with forthcoming announcements from project partners.

The Alabama Historical Commission extends its sincere appreciation to collaborators Black Heritage Council, National Geographic Society (NGS), Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC), the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP), SEARCH, INC, Diving with a Purpose (DWP), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the National Park Service (NPS), and Mobile County.



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**To learn more about the Alabama Historical Commission, please visit <u>www.ahc.alabama.gov.</u>

About the Alabama Historical Commission** Located in historic downtown Montgomery at 468 S. Perry Street, the Alabama Historical Commission is the state historic preservation agency for Alabama. The agency was created by an act of the state legislature in 1966 with a mission to protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic places. AHC works to accomplish its mission through two fields of endeavor: Preservation and promotion of state-owned historic sites as public attractions; and, statewide programs to assist people, groups, towns, and cities with local preservation activities. For a complete list of programs and properties owned and operated by the AHC, hours of operation, and admission fees please visit <u>ahc.alabama.gov.</u>

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National Geographic Society's Involvement in Clotilda

As part of the Alabama Historical Commission's search for Clotilda, the National Geographic Society provided funding and systematic scientific research to assist in Jim Delgado's exploration of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The Society's archeologist-in-residence Fred Hiebert assisted Jim Delgado in three sonar surveys of the river, which involved testing potential targets and collecting samples of wood and mud for DNA testing. The National Geographic Society is currently conducting innovative testing on DNA that was extracted from wood of the ship and nearby soil. The Society hopes this DNA will identify those who were transported on this ship over 150 years ago.

Quotes for Use

Quotes should be attributed to Fredrik Hiebert, archeologist-in-residence, National Geographic Society:

- The National Geographic Society is honored to have supported the scientific research behind the discovery of the Clotilda. Supporting bold individuals and organizations who illuminate the wonders of our world, and all that's in it, is at the heart of the Society's mission. We are guided by the belief that science and exploration will help us better understand the human journey.
- The discovery of the Clotilda sheds new light on a lost chapter of American history. This finding is also a critical piece of the Africatown story, which was built by the resilient descendants of America's last slave ship.

About the National Geographic Society

The National Geographic Society is a global nonprofit organization that uses the power of science, exploration, education and storytelling to illuminate the wonder of the world, define critical challenges and catalyze action to protect our planet. Since 1888, National Geographic has pushed the boundaries of exploration, investing in bold people and transformative ideas, providing more than 14,000 grants for work across all seven continents, reaching 3 million students each year through education offerings, and engaging audiences around the globe through signature convenings and content. To learn more, visit www.nationalgeographic.org.

May 22, 2019

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Statement on the Discovery of the Slave Ship Clotilda

National Museum of African American History and Culture Applauds The discovery of the Clotilda

New Evidence Solves the Mystery of America's Last Slave Ship

A critically important chapter in the history of the international slave trade opened this week with the discovery of the charred and submerged remains of the Clotilda, a wooden ship that carried 110 enslaved Africans from the west coast of Africa into Alabama's Mobile Bay in the autumn of 1859.

The enslaved did not perish; they had been taken off ship and moved inland. The ship was burned and deliberately sunk to destroy criminal evidence: Clotilda captain William Foster and Clotilda owner Timothy Meaher were involved in an illegal transport of human cargo, a crime for which they would be tried but not convicted.

Finding the wreckage—and confirming it as the Clotilda—is the result of nearly one year of historical and archaeological investigations led by the Alabama Historical Commission and SEARCH, Inc., a collection of maritime archaeologists and divers specializing in exploring historic shipwrecks. According to the Alabama Historical Commission, the Clotilda is believed to be the last ship to bring enslaved Africans to America.

Finding the Clotilda makes it possible to see the history of the slave trade in human terms, to bring that story out of the past into the present and to make it tangible. It also provides an opportunity for people to reflect and talk publicly, openly and in depth about one of America's most painful legacies.

In 2018, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture joined the Clotilda research through its Slave Wrecks Project (SWP), an international network of four institutions and a host of local and regional partners. The project was created in 2008 to research and document the international slave trade through the lens of maritime archeology and the study of sunken slave ships.

The museum and SWP supported the Alabama Historical Commission in archaeological work and in designing a way to involve the community of Africatown in the process of preserving the memory of the Clotilda and the legacy of slavery and freedom in Alabama. Many of the residents of Africatown are descendants of the Africans who were brought to Alabama on the Clotilda.

"It has been a high honor for the museum to play a part in bringing forward this story and to use it as a platform to reinforce a crucial truth: that the story of slavery and freedom is central to the nation's story and is still relevant to our own lives," said Lonnie G. Bunch III, founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

"One of the core components in the mission of the Slave Wrecks Project is to make sure that any archaeological work is deeply connected to local communities and addresses questions of race, reckoning and how the past continues to shape the present," said Paul Gardullo, curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and co-director of SWP.

About the Slave Wrecks Project

The Slave Wrecks Project (SWP) is an international network of researchers and institutions hosted by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Created to take a distinctive approach to the study of the transatlantic slave trade, SWP uses maritime archaeology, historical research and the study of sunken slave ships as its entry points. It also integrates technical training, diving training, support for heritage protection and deep community engagement into operations that connect local, national and global audiences.

The partnership has grown from a research collaboration into an organization that draws on archaeology, anthropology, history, the sciences and the humanities. The current partners are The George Washington University, the U.S. National Park Service, the Iziko Museums of South Africa and Diving with a Purpose, an affiliate of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers.

The SWP network also works with institutions, researchers and community groups on research projects in South Africa, Mozambique, Senegal, Cuba, Brazil, Saint Croix, Florida and other sites in the U.S.

About the National Museum of African American History and Culture

The National Museum of African American History and Culture opened Sept. 24, 2016 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Occupying a five-acre site next to the Washington Monument, the nearly 400,000-square-foot museum is the nation's largest and most comprehensive cultural destination devoted exclusively to exploring, documenting and

showcasing the African American story and its impact on American and world history. For more information about the museum, visit nmaahc.si.edu, follow @NMAAHC on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat or call Smithsonian information at (202) 633-1000.

What SWP participants are saying about the discovery of the Clotilda:

"We applaud the Alabama Historical Commission for recognizing the importance of this approach wherein long-neglected histories are being recovered, restored, remembered, protected and shared," said Steve Lubkemann, professor of anthropology at The George Washington University and co-director of SWP.

"This discovery brings a reminder that all of us need to become stewards of this story," said Paul Gardullo, co-director of SWP. "To be true stewards we all need to understand the sacredness of this site as well as hundreds of other sites related to slavery. While the people of Alabama are the official custodians of this site, we all need to recognize our role in remembering, preserving and sharing this story."

"It was an honor to engage with the residents of Africatown, many of whom are descendants of the captive Africans who were forced onto the Clotilda and into enslavement," said Mary N. Elliott, curator of American slavery at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and leader of the community engagement activities for SWP. "While we can find artifacts and archival records, the human connection to the history helps us engage with this American story in a compelling way. The legacies of slavery are still apparent in the community. But the spirit of resistance among the African men, women and children who arrived on the Clotilda lives on in the descendant community."

"Finding the Clotilda represents the final nautical bookend to one of the most horrific periods in American and world history," said Kamau Sadiki, a member of the peer review team that confirmed the identity of the Clotilda. "It was humbling and an honor to have worked on this project. It is my hope that this discovery brings a comforting peace to the Africatown descendants and begins a process of genuine community and memory restoration." Sadiki also works with SWP's community engagement program training local residents to dive and conduct underwater research. He is the lead dive instructor for Diving with a Purpose, a group of black scuba divers advocating underwater archaeology and stewardship of the oceans.

"The Alabama Historical Commission and SEARCH, Inc. did stellar work and rigorous research in challenging and dangerous conditions," said Dave Conlin, a founding member of SWP and head of the National Park Service's Submerged Resources Center. "This kind of archaeological work is painstaking and difficult under any circumstances, but the physical

conditions of this particular site – zero visibility, high currents and potential entanglements – made this an especially difficult shipwreck to work on." Conlin was also was part of the 2018 Clotilda search team and most recently served as a member of the peer review team that confirmed the identity of the Clotilda.



About

SEARCH is the largest archaeology and cultural resources management company in the world, and SEARCH₂Ois the largest underwater archaeology program. Specializing in mega-infrastructure projects and emergency response on land and water, SEARCH delivers high capacity cultural resource services directly to every region in the US and globally. Since 1993, SEARCH has completed more than 3,500 projects across 44 US States and 37 countries, spanning five continents and three oceans.

Quotes

"SEARCH is humbled by the story and significance of this archaeological site. As archaeologists, we are often asked why the work we do matters. The story of Clotilda is a testament to how cultural heritage can impact a community, especially one as powerfully connected to this story as Africatown. Through the archaeology, we are able to tell the story of the people who were captured from their homes in Africa, taken across the ocean under unbearable conditions, and endured untold hardships to build a life in this country. We have not only the archival evidence and the oral history, but now we have the actual vessel, the tangible evidence of this chapter in our nation's history."

Dr. Anne V. Stokes, CEO of SEARCH, Inc.

"Shipwrecks can be powerful catalysts that bring communities and peoples together. We are seeing that already with Clotilda."

"This shipwreck discovery is another example of the power of teamwork—scientific, community, government groups all working together toward one common goal. Clotilda has been found."

"Archaeology is time travel. From these muddy waters, we find the stories of the past, of the present, of the future. The team did good work today."

James Pochurek, President of SEARCH, Inc.



IMAGE/Arthur Clark

Logos, Images, and Video Available at Bit.ly/AHCClotilda